

CIA Spies?

Health

'Periled'

Colby Report Cites Strain on Agents in U.S.

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The Central Intelligence Agency worked so hard at spying on domestic dissidents that it threatened the health of the CIA officers assigned to the project, according to a secret report submitted to President Ford last December.

CIA Director William E. Colby acknowledged to Mr. Ford in a covering letter that the "surveillance" program, which came to be known as Operation CHAOS, sometimes "overstepped proper bounds," but assured him that it did not amount to "massive domestic intelligence activity" in violation of the CIA's charter.

After keeping Colby's report secret for six months, the CIA, with the approval of the President, abruptly released it last night after the normal close of business.

It fell far short in many cases of the details and disclosures made by the Rockefeller commission, which announced last month that the CIA had engaged in "plainly unlawful" conduct over the course of its 28-year history.

According to the CIA documents that Colby supplied to the White House in the wake of disclosures by The New York Times, the agency considered the domestic spying "a low-cost collection program," but expressed concern in June, 1972, about the 42 officials then assigned to it.

With vacant slots beginning to build up, the CIA warned in a June 1, 1972, briefing paper that quick replacements were "essential to bring a halt to the physical drain on the health of the group's officers trying to keep up with the enormous continuing volume of work."

According to one White House official, the release of the report — consisting of Colby's six-page covering letter and 58 pages of various memoranda — was prompted in part by a pending freedom-of-information lawsuit filed by Morton Halperin of the Center for National Security Studies, demanding a copy of the document.

"The feeling was, if you're going to release it anyway, why not release it now?" the White House aide said.

In his report to Ford, Colby admitted that the domestic surveillance program, initiated to determine "possible foreign links to domestic dissidents," had generated the development of files on American citizens.

"The total index of these Americans amounts to 9,944 counterintelligence files," the CIA director told the President.

Colby, however, made no mention of the fact that the program, in the words of the Rockefeller commission, also produced "a computer system containing an index of over 300,000 names and organizations which, with few exceptions, were of United States citizens and organizations apparently unconnected with espionage."

The CIA, however, apparently did take pride in the assistance its computers provided for the operation, saying in the June, 1972, briefing paper that they were essential to the assignment.

"Without such computer support, it would be impossible to run this program with the relatively small number of people authorized and with the short time deadlines required to provide effective requirements and guidance for field operations, and to respond effectively to special studies and estimate require-

ments levied upon the agency," the internal CIA briefing paper stated.

Another of the internal CIA documents on domestic surveillance raises new questions about whether Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, as national security adviser to the President, had more involvement with the program than he has acknowledged.

Kissinger has denied that he ever dealt with the domestic intelligence reports from CIA to the White House. On May 5, after appearing before the Rockefeller commission, Kissinger told reporters:

"Since I have been in Washington, the National Security Council or the NSC staff or the assistant to the President for national security affairs did not concern themselves with domestic intelligence or were not informed about domestic intelligence."

However, a CIA memorandum on the domestic counterintelligence operation, also dated June 1, 1972, indicated that some reports were going to the presidential assistant for national security affairs—Kissinger.

The memo, describing inter-agency liaison, noted:

"Counterintelligence of exceptional importance is disseminated over the signature of the director of CIA and is sent, as appropriate, to the

of State, the Attorney General and the director, Federal Bureau of Investigation. The principal White House addressee is the counsel to the President who has special cognizance over domestic affairs; when appropriate, the information is also sent to the assistant to the President for national security affairs."

Still another top-level CIA the agency's executive director, written by Colby as of April 21, 1972, and entitled "CIA Activities in the United States," showed that periodic concern was voiced by agency employees about "various allegations or rumors" concerning CIA domestic operations.

Suggesting that such talk was unwarranted, Colby reminded CIA deputy directors and division chiefs of then-CIA Director Richard Helms' "State of the Agency" speech to CIA employees on Sept. 17, 1971—in which Helms denied the CIA was engaging in improper activities.

After having stated publicly earlier in 1971 that the CIA did "not target on American citizens" and did not engage in any internal security functions, Helms assured the CIA workers that "you can rely on those denials."

"They're true," Helms added of the denials, "and you